

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2229

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, NP

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER RIJAL SPEAKS TO INDIAN QUESTION

1. IN DISCUSSION ON FOREIGN POLICY JULY 4 IN NATIONAL PANCHAYAT, PRIME MINISTER RIJAL STATED THAT RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA ARE THAT COUNTRY'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS. HE IS QUOTED AS NOTING THAT "LEADERS OF INDIA MAY HAVE TAKEN THE RECENT STEPS KEEPING IN VIEW THE BEST INTERESTS OF THEIR COUNTRY." RIJAL SAID THAT HE REMAINED ASSURED OF "EVEN BETTER RELATIONS" WITH INDIA IN THE FUTURE AND WISHED GOI SUCCESS IN ITS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE PROSPERITY.

2. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENT, PRESS HAS ACKNOWLEDGED FOR FIRST TIME THAT SOME INDIAN POLITICIANS HAVE TAKEN REFUGE IN NEPAL, INCLUDING MAHABIR PRASAD SINGH, FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER IN BIHAR, AND KARPURI TAKHUR, DESCRIBED AS "LEADING BLD LEADER OF INDIA." ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON NUMBERS OF POLITICAL REFUGEES IN NEPAL, VIRTUALLY OPEN BORDER WITH U.P. AND BIHAR MAKES IT LIKELY THAT NEPAL WILL BE USED AS SAFEHAVEN BY SOME INDIAN OPPOSITION

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POLITICIANS. SEVERAL PAPERS CITING "KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES"

HAVE REPORTED THAT NEPAL WILL NOT ALLOW ITS SOIL TO BE USED AS BASE FOR ACTIVITIES AGAINST "ANY FRIENDLY COUNTRY," OR FOR HOSTILE PROPAGANDA OR ACTIVITIES OF A POLITICAL NATURE AGAINST NEIGHBORING STATES.

3. COMMENT: IN DISCUSSIONS WITH JOINT SECRETARY MFA (SHARDUL RANA) AND UNDER SECRETARY IN CHARGE OF INDIAN AFFAIRS (ISHWARI PANDE) CHARGE WAS TOLD THAT "SOME REFUGEES" HAD CROSSED INTO NEPAL AND THAT SO LONG AS THEY DID NOT ENGAGE IN ANTI-INDIAN ACTIVITIES THEY WOULD BE AS FREE TO STAY AS WOULD "ANY OTHER INDIAN CITIZEN." PANDE SAID THAT "AS YET" GON HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY COMMENT FROM INDIAN AUTHORITIES ON THIS POLICY; RANA WAS QUICK TO SAY THAT THERE WAS NO REASON WHY THIS GON POLICY SHOULD AFFECT BILATERAL RELATIONS. BOTH, HOWEVER, WERE SLIGHTLY DEFENSIVE, POINTING OUT DIFFICULTY OF IDENTIFYING POLITICAL REFUGEES, LACK OF DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED FOR CITIZENS OF BOTH COUNTRIES TO TRAVEL FREELY, AND LACK OF EXTRADITION ARRANGEMENTS FOR CIVIL OFFENSES. WHILE GON COULD CITE PAST ACTIVITIES OF NEPALI CONGRESS PARTY (NCP) EXILES IN INDIA IF GOI CHALLENGES ITS ASYLUM POLICY, IT CLEARLY HOPES TO AVOID GOI CHARGES THAT IT IS AIDING ENEMIES OF INDIA. GON WILL THEREFORE PRESUMABLY IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON POLITICAL REFUGEES AT LEAST AS TIGHT AS THOSE IMPOSED BY GOI ON NCP ACTIVISTS WITHIN BORDER REGION.

4. RIJAL'S COMMENTS TO PANCHAYAT WENT BEYOND STRICT NO COMMENT STANCE PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED BY GON SPOKESMEN. HIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT DECREES MIGHT BE IN INDIA'S BEST INTERESTS STRIKE A POSITIVE NOTE WHICH SHOULD BE WELCOME IN NEW DELHI. WE NOTE THAT DR. TULSI GIRI, POLITICAL ADVISOR TO KING BIRENDRA, WENT TO DELHI LAST WEEK AND WAS RECEIVED BY MRS. GANDHI. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON REASONS FOR TRIP OR EVEN WHETHER IT WAS OFFICIALLY INSPIRED, WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF GIRI WAS CARRYING MESSAGE FROM THE PALACE.

5. IN GENERAL, NEPAL CONTINUES TO BE RELATIVELY RELAXED ABOUT SITUATION IN INDIA. WE HAVE FOUND SURPRISING NUMBER OF PERSONS IN KATHMANDU WHO, WHILE DECRYING "END OF DEMOCRACY" IN INDIA, ACCEPT THAT MRS. GANDHI'S MOVES WERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TIMELY AND NECESSARY. GON OFFICIALS HOPE THAT CURRENT "BUSINESS AS USUAL" APPROACH CAN BE MAINTAINED. THEY ARE, HOWEVER, WATCHING SITUATION CLOSELY, PARTICULARLY FOR SIGNS THAT INDIA IS LURCHING LEFTWARD UNDER SOVIET PRESSURE OR THAT LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN NEIGHBORING STATES IS DETERIORATING. QUANTON

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